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RUSSIA AND THE WAR AFTER THE WAR

BY CHARLES JOHNSTON

THE situation in Russia grows steadily clearer, and at the same time more menacing. The events of the last month at Petrograd have made it, I think, abundantly evident that there is not an atom of difference in principle between the various groups of Socialists who are "playing politics" in the former Russian capital; there is simply a ferocious rivalry between the "ins" and the "outs." Lenin and Trotsky have been able to seize and hold autocratic power simply because they are more audacious, because they are wholly devoid of scruples or hesitations, and are, like the German forces on the Belgian frontier at the beginning of August, 1914, determined to hack their way through to victory. But we shall be wise to realize that the Socialist programme is identical, not only among all the Russian Socialist groups, but in all Socialist organizations whatsoever, throughout the world. They all desire to do exactly what Lenin and Trotsky are doing; and they will do it the instant they get the opportunity. We are face to face, not with a Russian peril, but with a worldwide peril; and the struggle with these destructive forces will constitute, I believe, "the war after the war" far more than any economic struggle against Germany.

We shall be wise, therefore, to take advantage of the present situation, clearly to see and clearly to formulate the purposes and principles of the Russian Bolshevik forces, not merely because this is essential to a right understanding of the situation in Russia, but far more because Petrograd happens to be the point at which the purposes and principles of world Socialism, through the removal of outside pressure, have reached the boiling-point, revealing themselves in their stark destructiveness.

We have been told that Lenin and Trotsky have been making a gallant and heroic fight against imperialist Germany on behalf of the rights of those parts of the former Russian Empire occupied by German and Austrian troops: on behalf of Poland, Courland and Lithuania. And this fight, which we are asked to welcome and applaud, is being made in the name of the "principle of the self-determination of peoples," which is, by the way, a phrase translated from German. But before we approve and applaud we shall do well to ask ourselves what the real purpose of the Russian peace negotiators is; what they really have in view for these occupied regions, should some miracle bring about the removal of the German and Austrian armies. How will "self-determination" actually work out?

We shall find the real answer at Petrograd, in Finland, in southern Russia, in Roumania.

How has "self-determination" actually worked out at Petrograd? The fate of the recent Constituent Assembly, which has now followed the hapless Duma into the void, is the answer to that. The Duma was in a sense representative of all classes of Russians: the nobility, the Church, the merchants, the manufacturers, the workmen, the peasants. Members of all these classes actually sat in it, spoke and voted. From the point of view of the Socialists, that was enough to damn it. They absolutely scout the idea of the equal rights of all classes. In their view, no class has any rights at all, except the Socialists themselves, and the class which they claim to represent, "the poorest class," according to the wording of Lenin's recent manifesto. All elements above "the poorest class" are frankly doomed to destruction. It is, of course, notorious that the Socialist leaders themselves practically never belong to the class they claim to represent. They are, for the most part, ambitious lawyers or writers, "white-handed," as the Russia phrase is, who see the possibility of gaining autocratic power for themselves by inflaming, in "the poorest class," the passions of envy and cupidity. It is futile to claim for them humane and exalted ideals and motives; the time-tried rule must apply to them: "the tree is known by its fruits."

And because their real motive is autocratic power, to be grasped by inflaming the cupidity of "the poorest class," however much they may try to veil their purpose by fine phrases, they fight furiously and unscrupulously for power

among themselves, quite regardless of their common verbal adherence to humanitarian principles. This was quite clearly shown by the fate of the so-called Constituent Assembly, which was, of course, not representative of all Russia in any true sense, but was practically a gathering of Socialists only. It was, to leave out elements which had no practical meaning, divided into two groups of Socialists, with identical programmes: a minority of Bolshevik Socialists and a majority of Revolutionary Socialists. And, simply because the Bolshevik Socialists had command of the Red Guard, a band of desperadoes originally armed by Alexander Kerensky in his uncandid struggle against General Korniloff, the Lenin-Trotsky party drove out the majority of the Constituent Assembly at the point of the bayonet, a number of them being murdered. Before we grieve over these murders we should remind ourselves that, had the Revolutionary Socialists been in a minority, but in possession of predominant armed force, they would have used exactly the same violent measures to secure control for themselves.

In Petrograd, therefore, the principles and practice of the Socialists have made themselves entirely clear; they are a group of despotic leaders, not belonging to "the working class," who are grasping at autocratic power by inflaming the cupidity of the lowest class to murderous violence. I wrote the words "the working class" in quotation marks a few lines back, to bring out a fundamental principle of Socialism; they recognize as "work,"—not in their protestations but in their actions,—only palpably material work, the exercise of the muscles, not of the intellectual and spiritual powers. They tacitly declare war against these; spiritual power, of course, they openly scoff at, since they are frankly materialist; and intellectual power they will annihilate, so far as in them lies. They are already annihilating it in Russia. For we must now see clearly that the Russia which once enriched the world by its spiritual and intellectual life and accomplishment has ceased to exist. And exactly the same destruction will follow in the wake of Socialism, wherever it is triumphant. In the last analysis, this will inevitably mean an unspeakable degradation and impoverishment of all humanity, an abasement which will fall first and heaviest on the lowliest classes, the very "People" whom the Socialists assert that they worship. By destroying the spiritual and intellectual life of mankind the Socialists will plunge the world

into a bestial degradation which we shall be wise to realize in advance. Therefore, all who have at heart the true well-being of mankind must be the uncompromising foes of Socialism, and must be diligent in stripping off the false pretences, the dishonest humanitarian protestations, which disguise the fatally dangerous reality.

So far, Petrograd and the regions immediately dominated by Petrograd. We come now to Finland. Finland is an excellent example of one of the smaller nationalities of Europe which has its own tongue, its own thought, its own constitutional life. When Finland passed, in 1809, from Swedish to Russian control this national life continued unimpaired, except for a brief, unhappy period of "Russification," the aims of which were early abandoned. And as a result of the elimination of Nicholas II as Grand Duke of Finland the practical tie between the two countries was broken a year ago. Finland desired completely independent national life, and the constitutionalist Provisional Government made some advances toward recognizing this desire, planning, perhaps, a federal union between Russia and Finland later on. But the November revolution swept the Provisional Government out of existence. The Bolshevik Socialists, who then came into power, proclaimed their acceptance of the German phrase "self-determination of nations." How did they, in fact, work it out for Finland? By sending a Red Guard army over the frontier, to force Bolshevik principles upon Finland, wholly regardless of Finland's own wishes and aspirations. As this is written, the national army of Finland is fighting valiantly against this Russian invasion, which is every whit as brutal, as unjust, as tyrannous as was the German invasion of Belgium in 1914. So much for humanitarian protestation—and for practice. And the Socialists will do exactly the same thing, making the same glib protestations, wherever and whenever they get the chance.

Their action in Southern Russia proves this to demonstration. Two regions of Southern Russia had declared their autonomy, the Ukraine and the country of the Don Cossacks. The Ukrainian movement, as we know, had been secretly fostered by Vienna for years, as a part of the subtle and far-reaching Hapsburg plan. The purpose was twofold: to weaken Russia by a separatist impulse, and to strengthen the Hapsburg control over the Southeastern Slavs, really in order to use them against the Magyars. For

this is, I believe, the secret of the Hapsburg tenderness for the Poles; and the Hapsburgs would, I think, if the Austrian Teutons allowed them, give much larger freedom both to the Czechs and to the Jugo-Slavs, Serbian and other, from a sincere love, not of Slav nationalism, but of the Hapsburgs. And we shall be wise, in parenthesis, to cherish no delusions as to Hapsburg benignity. They are playing a difficult game, and they are playing it with subtlety and determination. But benignity is not one of its elements. For I am deeply convinced that the purposes of the Hapsburgs are just as brutally egotistic as those of the Hohenzollerns; but their methods are more subtle and polished—and, therefore, the more dangerous.

But the result of Hapsburg support in the past is that the professional Ukrainians now tend toward Austria and to a separate peace with Austria. There are other elements in the Ukraine which are more genuinely national, and which might develop a valuable nationality; for these Southern Russians have many great gifts. But have the Petrograd Socialists been willing, while professing adherence to "self-determination" of nationalities, to allow this Southern Russian nationality to develop along its own inherent lines? The despatches give the answer: Bolshevik forces have invaded the Ukraine, as they have invaded Finland, in order to thrust the principles of the Petrograd Bolsheviks down the throats of the Ukrainians. In the Ukraine, as in Finland, the Bolshevik Socialists are stirring up and waging civil war, war for the Socialist despotism, and they are recruiting the forces of the "Red Army" precisely by inflaming the envy and cupidity of their followers.

The outrages of the Bolshevik despotism, the application of their singular understanding of "self-determination," have not been limited to parts of the former Russian Empire. Nothing could be more striking, more full of revelation, than their action toward oft-betrayed Roumania. We have not yet heard the Roumanian side of the story; but, from what the Bolsheviks have themselves published, what happened would seem to be this: the Bolshevik despots of Petrograd determined to overthrow the existing government of Roumania, with which the Roumanian people and the Roumanian army appear to be entirely satisfied, but which does not comply with the standards of Socialist despotism. So they sent Bolshevik Red Guards to Roumania to force "the Social

Revolution " upon the Roumanians. These men were arrested and disarmed by the Roumanian army, which was, and is, loyal to the cause of the Allies, in the face of overwhelming sufferings. This wholly right and lawful act of self-defence aroused the ire of the Petrograd despots, who subjected the Roumanian Minister at Petrograd to insults such as accompanied the departure of Allied Ambassadors from Berlin in August, 1914; they sent armed forces against the Roumanians, and they " confiscated " a sum stated by them to be \$600,000,000 in gold, which the Roumanian Government had deposited for safe-keeping in Moscow. It would be possible to match this outrage against international morality only by similar acts of Germany.

This brings one naturally to the Petrograd Socialists' repudiation of loans to Russia, which, of course, they glibly excuse and explain; and which is, equally, of course, quite right and lawful according to the Socialist canon of honesty; no one but a Socialist has any rights which a Socialist is bound to recognize. By the way, how exactly that duplicates the German theory and practice! Knowing Socialism, therefore, we should have been entirely prepared for this repudiation, but there is a further point to be made. Exactly the same kind of reasoning was used by the Provisional Government to justify the proposed plundering of land-owners in Russia, in one of their Socialistic experiments, the purpose of which seems to have been a shameful desire to win the support of the Russian peasants by an appeal to their greed. The moral is this: if we made no protest whatever when the Socialists of the Provisional Government planned to plunder the Russian land-owners, then we have not the slightest right to protest now, when the same doctrine is applied to our loans in Russia.

So, through this series of examples, we reach a position in which we are better able to answer the question raised at the outset: What is the real purpose of the Petrograd despots in pretending to espouse, at Brest-Litovsk, the freedom, the liberty of self-determination, of Poland, Courland and Lithuania? Surely it is quite evidently this: they wish to be in a position to force these regions also to swallow the bitter fruits of the Russian Revolution; they wish to be in a position to send Red Guards over their frontiers, as they have already sent them over the frontiers of Finland, of Ukraina, of Roumania. And, abominable as has been the tyranny of the

German and Austrian armies of occupation in Poland, worse, if possible, than their acts in Belgium and occupied France, it is a matter of serious doubt whether Poland would not suffer even worse things, if given up to the tender mercies of the Petrograd Socialists and their Red Guard of murderous desperadoes. They would make true the words of Joel: "That which the locust hath left hath the cankerworm eaten."

But we shall flatter ourselves if we imagine that the Socialists intend or expect to limit their blessings to Eastern Europe and, perhaps, Russian Asia. Their own professions to the contrary are entirely frank; they are calling for a Red Army of Russians to force their despotism on the whole world; and their intention to do this is what I mean by "the war after the war." And they already have their allies in the least successful elements in every country, who have persuaded themselves that their failure is due to "capitalist despotism," and who are prepared to begin the Socialist civil war the instant they see a chance of success. Precisely the same principles which we see now operative in Petrograd, with precisely the same inspiration of envy, hatred and greed, have been preached in every "platform" of the Socialist party in this country and elsewhere; and we are in a far better position today to realize what these incendiary principles mean than we were a year, or six months ago, before Russian Socialism had a chance to reveal itself. A year ago the overwhelming triumph of Socialism in Russia appeared a dream. Today it is a destructive reality. We shall do well, therefore, not to regard as a dream the possible infection of other countries.

All that I have said concerning the Russian Socialists is based, not on hostile testimony, but on what they have published about themselves or allowed to be published; much of it is drawn from their manifestos.

So the revelation of Russian Socialism is, thanks to themselves, pretty complete. I have tried to analyze it at length, in order to press a practical point: We are advised by writers who are either deceived, or wilfully deceive themselves, to come to terms with these "advocates of democracy," these "friends of humanity," to make common cause with them against German imperialism. That advice I should like to combat, not with the logic of argument, but with the logic of fact.

The Provisional Government of Russia a year ago en-

tered into a compact with the Russian Socialists, and made common cause with them against the régime which they held to be their common enemy. I suggest that, before coming to terms with those same Russian Socialists and signing a treaty with them, we take counsel from the Provisional Government, asking them how, in their experience, their own alliance with the Russian Socialists has worked out. Or, to put the thing more directly, I am profoundly convinced that any alliance with these forces of destruction will be exactly as fatal to whoever makes it as was the ill-fated and, as I hold, deeply unprincipled alliance made with them by the Duma revolutionists. Their aims are not our aims; their principle of opposition to Germany is not our principle. They wish to overthrow German despotism, in order to substitute a despotism of their own, quite as tyrannous, quite as destructive—if not more destructive. Like Germany, they aim at world-wide domination. And their domination will mean not the destruction of nationalities only, but the destruction of everything that gives worth to human life; of everything beyond animal self-indulgence, which is, for them, the only reality.

Now that I have tried to indicate the real nature and the ugly menace of Russian Socialism, which differs not at all from Socialism the world over, I am not willing to leave the matter with what may be called a purely negative statement. Let me try to state the affirmative side: If the principles and practice of Socialism are what they are, what is the really effective way to meet them—to save the life of humanity from this menacing evil?

Fundamentally, Socialism is an appeal to egotism, to envy, hatred and greed; an appeal which, Russia's experience shows, sows and quickly reaps a crop of spoliation, outrage and murder. Let us see clearly, at the outset, that it is folly to try to oppose to this contagious and inflammatory egotism some other expression of egotism. If the principles of Socialism be, as I believe, principles of evil, they can only be conquered by the principles of good; against their greedy self-indulgence we must oppose self-sacrifice; we must defeat their spurious and murderous "brotherhood" by real brotherhood; we must overcome their false internationalism by a genuine patriotism, grounded in sacrifice.

Socialism teaches that great wealth, the conspicuous reward of successful effort, is really plunder, made possible by "the capitalistic system." But in reality the winning of

great wealth is the fruit, not of capital, but of extraordinary gifts of insight and energy; the insight to perceive some immensely wide-spread need or requirement, and the constructive energy to supply that need. One can only make millions by supplying the needs of millions; and every exceptionally gifted man who has made millions has at the same time enriched, by supplying their needs, millions besides himself. There are seeming exceptions; but this is the general rule. Therefore, the free activity of the exceptionally gifted men enriches the whole community, the whole nation, the whole human race. The Socialists, I think, either fail to see, or are unwilling to see, this simple natural law. They see only the reward—and the sight of the reward fills them with envy and hatred.

But even the reward they do not see truly; and, indeed, I think that, in this reward of immense wealth, there is a great element of benevolent glamor—benevolent, because it leads the exceptionally gifted men to exert their great and valuable powers to the full, to the enrichment of the whole community; but also glamor, because so great a part of the reward dwells only in the imagination.

For example: even the multi-millionaire does not wear two suits of clothes at once, or eat two dinners at once, nor can he be in two rooms at once. And one room, one suit of clothes, one dinner, most of us can fairly come by. And all the rest is touched with glamor. Let us be grateful that our exceptionally gifted men are willing and eager to take their pay in fairy gold.

But the practical point is this: these gifted men, gifted with insight and energy, make their fortunes by perceiving a want and then supplying it. But just at the point of supplying the need, they may make a fair bargain or they may drive a hard bargain. A fair bargain leaves both parties well satisfied. A hard bargain leaves in the man whose need is supplied at too great cost to himself a feeling of rankling injustice—and this is the stuff that Socialism is made of. Our gifted men, I am persuaded, find their real reward in the free exercise of their great powers, in the sense of freely flowing creative energy, a faculty in essence Godlike. But they find a less authentic reward in precisely the things the Socialist sees and covets. It would seem, then, that what is needed is a clearer recognition on their part that their true motive and driving-power is already spiritual, with a consequent spirit-

ualizing of their whole feeling about their work and its rewards. This will transmute the alloy of egotism in them, and will make them generous, so that they will make only generous bargains. And it is an open secret that it will also make them happy. But the practical point is, that this all-round generous dealing will sterilize the poison of Socialism.

This is a practical counsel. Let us put it to the test, as we have already, as a nation, put to the test another spiritual law, the supreme principle of courageous sacrifice in a holy cause. Let anyone compare the national feeling to-day with the feeling of this nation when the sinking of the *Lusitania* was accepted, and he will clearly see that our sacrifice has brought us immense national happiness. The spiritual law has already justified itself. It will do so, not less strikingly, if worked out through the whole field of national production. We shall then have true brotherhood, instead of the spurious and murderous brotherhood of Socialism.

I said, a little while back, that Socialists are either blind or blind themselves to the simple natural law that really governs the possession of wealth. Of this blindness, there is, I think, a very simple cause, which can be expressed in terms of two dates. Karl Marx, the father of the Socialism of hatred and greed, completed his theory and published his great book about 1850. But it was nearly ten years later that Darwin, in *The Origin of Species*, disclosed the principle of progressive development through the natural selection of gifted individuals. And this is the same principle which in human life, I think, ordains that all progress is made through the efforts of exceptionally gifted individuals, who, while raising themselves, raise the whole level of humanity; a law true not only in the field of production, from which I drew my illustration, but in every field of the life of mankind, and especially in intellectual, moral and spiritual life. And it is precisely against the exceptionally gifted men that the Socialists in their blind envy and greed have declared war. They are doing their best to annihilate the one effective means of human progress.

And, primarily, I am convinced, because they do not understand the simplest laws of Evolution; because their text book was written ten years before Darwin, and because its ideas and, even more, its bitter and destructive spirit, have never been changed.

CHARLES JOHNSTON.